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## CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL NOTES.

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### THE TRANSCENDENTAL ELEMENT IN THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

THE application of historical criticism to the teaching of Jesus Christ, regarded by itself, seems like an attack on the originality of his ideas. Inquiries into the antecedents of those ideas, as they appear in the gospels, point to contributions from preceding Jewish thought—sayings of the rabbis, especially of the school of Hillel, apocalyptic writings, perhaps practices of the Essenes, as some suppose. And meanwhile a new and daring development of the *kenosis* doctrine goes out to meet this historical criticism, cheerfully surrendering whatever it may claim.

But when so much is conceded that it is difficult to find room for any appreciable amount of originality, the ease with which the triumph of historical continuity has been attained begins to rouse uncomfortable suspicions as to the validity of the process. For after the logic of the situation has demonstrated that, viewed from the standpoint of its antecedents, Christianity would seem to be lacking in any considerable degree of originality, the patent facts of history rise up and confront it with the startling reminder that nevertheless Christianity has succeeded in turning the course of the world's life into new channels by a revolution of thought so stupendous as to be rightly named "a new creation."

This apparent contradiction is not to be resolved by merely pointing to the dynamic element of Christianity as its one distinguishing characteristic. It is true that Jesus Christ realized what his predecessors only dreamed, and that the greatest wonder of his work is its vitality rather than its novelty. Even in this direction we seem to be led on toward the transcendental, since there was nothing in apocryphal or rabbinical teaching to quicken its own seeds. That Jesus accomplished what others only thought is one indication that he drew on resources that were beyond their grasp.

Still, it may well be doubted whether this is enough to account for the facts. The form as well as the force of Christianity, the truth of

it as well as its power, come on the world as new in their wholeness, whatever they may seem to be in detail. The discovery of the quarry from which the stones of a building have been hewn is no explanation of the genius of the architect who planned it.

Thus we are driven back to a fresh examination of our data to discover how it is that, while so much in the teaching of Jesus may be traced to traditional or literary analogies, that teaching still commands the world's attention as something entirely unique. Assuredly we shall not recover the precious ore of divine originality by simply collecting the residuum when all that strikes us as of a local or temporary nature has been strained off. To follow such a process as this is to imitate the precarious device of the natural theologian, who, having retreated from one point after another under the relentless pressure of the advancing army of science, with its demonstration of uniformity in nature, has intrenched himself in a last fortress on the ground of the mystery of life, the plain consequence staring him in the face that, if ever vital forces are resolved into equivalent molecular movements and the reverse process is attained in the production of life from some transformation of known physical forces, forthwith theology must disappear from his universe. As with nature, so with Christ, we cannot be content to hold just one final citadel of the transcendental. We must go back over the whole course of the retreat to see it everywhere if we are to see it anywhere. If, then, the transcendental is not to be found in a mere residuum of unexplained ideas, where is it to be sought? Clearly not in phrase or sentence, not as this or that oracular statement which we can still preserve in literary isolation uncontaminated by contact with prior or contemporary thought. It must be sought in atmosphere, in perspective, in proportion, in spirit.

For example, we have a clear note of independence in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus sharply contrasts his own teaching on such subjects as murder, adultery, oaths, not only with that of the scribes, but also with that of the Pentateuch. It is possible to see antecedents of much that our Lord here teaches in various parts of the Old Testament—revenge forbidden in Proverbs (25: 21, 22), etc. And it may be surmised that the strong thinking of a mind of lofty moral tone could move to the positions here indicated in its own energy, without having recourse to any transcendental knowledge or impulse. Similarly in regard to his daring teaching and practice in the matter of the Sabbath, Jesus is able to appeal to the example of David and the language of Hosea (Matt. 12: 3, 7). A keen perception of analogy and a rigor-

ous drawing of inferences may be thought to suffice for the conclusions at which he arrived.

And yet, when we cease to take his ethics in detail, when we stand back from the picture and perceive it in its entirety, so that the proportions of the whole are apparent and the spirit that breathes through it is felt, we discover here no mere eclectic system, patched together out of even the very best elements of earlier thought, but an idea of life wholly in advance of Old Testament writings as well as rabbinical teaching, to which we are compelled to give the distinctive title "Christian ethics."

The question, then, is, How was this advance brought about ?

Wendt is decidedly opposed to the supposition that Jesus drew either on the teaching of the Pharisees or on that of the Essenes. His definite conviction is that our Lord went back to Scripture, ignoring or contradicting subsequent accretions. But this is no final explanation. First, we want to know how it was that he alone of all men came to do this ; second, why the result of his doing so was such a new reading of the Old Testament as ushers in the New. Clearly at least we must allow that Jesus took up a new attitude toward the Scriptures ; one closer to that of the prophets than to that of the legalists ; one that drew especially near to Jeremiah perhaps, still one that was new, in its newness making a break with the old, not alone in the law, but in Judaism generally.

But now we may approach the subject from another side. With Wendt the central point of the consciousness of Jesus and the key to all his specific thought and teaching are to be found in his perfectly unique perception of God as his Father. Beyschlag ventures to carry the analysis a step farther back, suggesting that, as Jesus realizes in his own person the beatitude of the pure in heart, it results that through his unique purity he sees God as no other man can see him. This of course must be allowed, though we may demur at the notion that it accounts for everything.

In the first place, the unique purity of Jesus itself calls for explanation. Then, if purity is not the bare negation of defilement, if it has also a positive character as absolute goodness, as the holiness without which no man can see God, for this to be raised to perfection is for a divine attribute to appear ; in other words, it is for Jesus to be evincing his own divinity. We come, then, to the position that it is through his divine sonship that Jesus knows the Father. Shall we call this a transcendental consciousness ? As regards the phenom-

enal, yes; for it is neither a sense perception nor a purely logical inference from sense perceptions in the plane of the understanding. It need not be thought of, however, as a revelation borne in upon the soul of Jesus *ab extra*, coming from what might be regarded as an external world of the eternal. If Jesus is of the eternal, and the eternal is in him, it would seem to follow that his own personal thinking will be in the sphere which to us is the transcendental. We need not, therefore, assert that our Lord followed other methods of thinking than those that come within the limits of human consciousness. His manner of dealing with the data of consciousness would be, one might say, just that which is natural to mankind. Otherwise, the completeness of his humanity is marred, or we fall into some form of *Docetism*. Neither need we fall back on a Nestorian division, a double stream of consciousness. Let us admit that while on earth he reasons as a man can naturally reason. Still it remains that his unique experience in contact with his Father must have afforded him data for his thinking which we do not possess, just as the data of consciousness in the saint differ from those of the abandoned sensualist, though the scale of difference must be infinitely greater in the experience of our Lord, because the purity of Christ is infinitely more holy than the sanctity of the most spotless saint.

Account for it as we may, or leaving it an unexplained mystery, we cannot be blind to the fact that Jesus comes to us with a new vision of God in his soul and a new revelation of God in his life and teaching. This is not altogether new in words; that may be granted ungrudgingly, and yet the great fact will remain unshaken. The spirituality of God, the goodness of God, the fatherhood of God are all to be found in the earlier revelation—the spirituality in Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, as surely as in the words of Jesus at Jacob's well, the goodness of God as emphatically in Psalms 23, 91, and 103, and many another passage of the old Scriptures, as in the twelfth chapter of Luke. The fatherhood of God, as it touches Israel, emerges more than once in the Old Testament, and indeed it appears in pagan literature. Homer's Zeus is the "father of gods and men," who in Latin becomes Jupiter, his fatherhood declared in his very name. Yet, on the lips of Jesus and in his life spirituality and goodness and fatherhood mean vastly more than in the sayings of prophets and poets of the past.

Marcion was only exaggerating a truth to which the Catholic churchmen against whom he protested were strangely blind, when he

daringly affirmed that Jesus had revealed a hitherto unknown God. The total impression of Christ's revelation of God is a new revelation. Especially may we say that the centrality of the fatherhood in the being of God, with the new depth of meaning now to be seen in it and the far-reaching consequences flowing from it and dominating all religious thought and life, was unknown till Jesus made it known. This is his fundamental contribution to the revelation of truth. It cannot be traced to Rabbinism, to Judaism, to Old Testament prophecy, to the Law. Springing from his own perceptions, born of his own conscious relationship with God, neither phenomenal nor illative, it is the supremely transcendental element in the thought of Jesus, as that thought is communicated to us by means of the gospels. But if we concede this point, we cannot stay here. Other elements in the thought and teaching of Jesus are of similar character, and are so because they are dominated by this central idea of God.

Thus the ideas of Jesus Christ concerning himself appear to be of the same nature. That he was early conscious of divine sonship, Luke's narrative of his visit to Jerusalem in his thirteenth year plainly indicates. We cannot say, however, that this consciousness implied to him from the first the assurance that he was the Messiah. We have no data for affirming that thus early it meant all that we attach to the idea of his divine sonship. It may not have been at all self-conscious; it may have been wholly concerned with God as his Father, not at all with himself as the Son. Nor can we definitely affirm that the full perception of sonship was first realized at the baptism. Still it is significant that Mark, our earliest authority, represents the revelation as then made solely to Jesus, and therefore, we may presume, as of real significance to him. Next it is to be observed that, whether first attained with this revelation or possessed earlier, the assurance of his Messiahship is henceforth clear to him; for the whole significance of temptation which in all three synoptic accounts follows sharply on the baptism turns on the mission of the Messiah, and how it might most readily be carried out. Here, once for all, Jesus rejects the part of the popular Messiah, choosing for himself a wholly different course.

The fact that the career of the popular Messiah presented itself to him in the light of a temptation is a clear proof that the course he felt constrained to follow lay before him as a duty, *i.e.*, that it was not chosen for reasons of policy as the best means to attain certain settled ends, but accepted under the obligation of truth and right. He must have seen from the first that Messianic deliverance and apocalyptic

happiness, redemption and the advent of the golden age could not be attained by force, or display, or any worldly methods—methods which to his pure soul meant the worship of Satan—that they could only come by means of the perception of truth and the life of holy obedience to the will of God—that life which is so well expressed by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, in his citation from the fortieth psalm: “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O my God.” He must also have seen that these blessings themselves were of a totally different nature from those of the Jewish millennial pictures of material delights.

But this was a new conception of the Messiahship. Righteousness, indeed, is associated with the Messianic victory in the “Psalms of Solomon;” but no Jew before Jesus conceived the idea of such a Messiah as Jesus was. We cannot set down this new turn in the Messianic idea to the force of circumstances—to such facts as the irresistible power of Rome which precluded any rational hope of success in an insurrection; the humble circumstances of Jesus, who as a provincial mechanic could not hope to win the honors of princely rank; or the specific gifts he enjoyed as prophet and teacher, pointing to the exercise of didactic rather than political functions. All three of these facts may have contributed to aid in the development of his Messianic idea. But they could not have shaped it from the first; because a Jew prejudiced by the popular notion must either have ignored the facts while fanatically clinging to his conviction of the Messiahship, in the spirit of a *zealot*, or have abandoned the dream of Messiahship in face of their remorseless opposition to the attainment of it in the way universally expected.

There must have been something in the consciousness of Jesus himself to determine him to pursue his original course as the Messiah. May not this be traced back to his consciousness of God? Such an idea of God as he possessed was inconsistent with the popular Messiahship; or at all events could not be satisfied with the crude materialism that accompanied it. If there is a transcendental element in our Lord’s consciousness of God, that must be taken into account in his conception of his own mission.

To the consciousness of Jesus, it would seem, the working out of his ideas concerning his vocation must have preceded his elaboration of the conception of the kingdom of God—the temptation in the wilderness occurring before the preaching in Galilee, and that early preaching only repeating John’s prior announcement of the near advent of the kingdom, all exposition of its nature being reserved for

a later stage of his mission. Nevertheless, in the order of his public teaching the exposition of the nature and laws of the kingdom comes before any declaration of his Messiahship. This was the text and theme of most of his teaching.

Here again we are struck with the originality of Jesus, though not always in form and phrase. It is possible to discover Old Testament antecedents to most of the specific characteristics of the kingdom of God, as this is expounded by our Lord. In particular Jeremiah's prophecy of the new covenant (Jer. 31 : 31) comes near to the very heart of our Lord's teaching. And yet it must be said that the total picture of the kingdom of God which Jesus draws is unique, new to the world, wholly his own. Its inwardness, its spirituality, its humaneness, its ethical purity, its mingled graciousness and elevation are all of a new order, born into the world with the teaching of its founder.

Then, if we go a step farther back it becomes apparent that this novel conception of the kingdom stands in the most intimate relations with our Lord's own perception of the nature and character of God. Since it is the kingdom of *God*, as God is so it must be; our idea of the kingdom must vary directly with our idea of God. If, then, the vision of God is transcendental, the idea of the kingdom of God rests on transcendental grounds.

The case is somewhat different with those parts of our Lord's teaching which appear to lie outside the range of his immediate experience on earth, even that profound interior experience which is represented by the vision of God attained in perfect purity of heart, or the perception of divine fatherhood responsive to the relation of sonship. Jesus speaks of more or less remote facts—his own death and resurrection, his second advent and reign in glory, the judgment of the nations, Gehenna, the life eternal. How far may we regard his words on these subjects as representative of a transcendental consciousness?

Our Lord's final rejection at the hands of the authorities was darkly foreshadowed by the treatment he received earlier from scribes and delegates of the Sanhedrin. Knowing them and seeing clearly what course he must pursue unflinchingly to the end, he must have perceived what that end could not but be. Probably Holman Hunt is right with the posture he gives to Jesus in his picture, "The Shadow of Death," one that precludes Jesus himself from seeing the shadow as of a crucified man that he is casting on the walls of Joseph's workshop when he stands there with outstretched hands. There is no reason to suppose



that the shadow lay across his path from the first, though the temptation may well have suggested a tragic ending to a course which deliberately defied the "prince of this world." Before long, however, the clouds gathered darkly enough to presage the approaching storm. But what of the resurrection? No calculation of human affairs could point to that miracle. We cannot deny that Jesus had a sure prevision of it. May we admit the supposition that his vision of the fatherhood of God, his consciousness of his own nature, and his firm conviction of his mission must have assured him that God would not permit his Holy One to see corruption?

Concerning his return in glory Jesus uses most positive language. In form this agrees with, and may be said to be derived from, current apocalyptic literature. So far, then, it does not point to transcendental elements of consciousness. But there are two additions: (1) his personal connection with the apocalyptic ideas; (2) the near approach of the end. The one might be regarded as an inference from his Messiahship, the other as a deduction from his perception that the Jewish state was ripe for judgment. And yet the language is singularly definite and exact; and much of it was remarkably verified in the tragic events of the year 70 A. D.

Lastly, as regards the future after death, Jesus adds nothing to current conception of its form. Concerning Gehenna he uses conventional language—he adds no new revelation, he betrays no consciousness of a transcendental nature. Touching this subject the accent lies on the ethical part of his teaching—as to *who* are in danger of Gehenna, a Dives negligent of Lazarus, a degenerate Pharisee. Here we see it is just the transcendental character of his ethics that comes in.

Concerning future blessedness he is most positive, though singularly sparing of descriptive imagery. He scarcely lifts the veil to make known the condition of the blessed dead, but he is quite certain that they live again and that they are blessed. On this subject he partly indorses current ideas. Is he then merely repeating them? It seems reasonable to say that his singularly clear and positive tone on a subject about which men speculate timorously points to sources of assurance beyond the reach of mankind. But at all events we may conclude that his vision of God and his reception of the divine fatherhood would here contribute to the conviction that such a God could not be a God of the dead, that to such a Father all his children must live.

If there is any truth and reasonableness in these considerations, they lead to the conclusion that there was a truly transcendental ele-

ment in our Lord's consciousness on earth ; but that this may not have been immediate in all relations, but centering in and radiating out from his consciousness of God.

WALTER F. ADENEY.

LONDON, ENGLAND.

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SOME ASPECTS OF PAUL'S THEOLOGY IN THE  
PHILIPPIAN EPISTLE.

I.

THE Philippian letter, as is well known, is not of a distinctively doctrinal character. It is a familiar epistle, called out by the generous gift of the Philippian church to Paul, in which to his acknowledgment of their bounty the apostle adds such practical counsels as his acquaintance with their circumstances suggests. It is informal and irregular in structure, so much so as to have provoked the challenge of its integrity. It passes rapidly and abruptly from one topic to another, and, like the second Corinthian letter, is characterized throughout by strong emotion.

Nevertheless, it holds a good deal of theology in solution. It deals with doctrinal points, not in the way of exposition, like the letter to the Romans, but in the way of allusion to principles and facts which are assumed to be familiar to the readers and accepted by them. Such hints as are furnished by the Thessalonian and Philippian epistles indicate that the type of Christianity in the Macedonian churches was exceptionally fine and robust. In Macedonia the apostle's teaching was little disturbed by foreign elements. There are, indeed, evidences of the unsettled conditions of a new spiritual life — the gradual rooting of new principles and the tendency to partisanship ; and Paul's exhortations are addressed to the common inclinations which develop under such conditions—boasting, self-love, ambition, and petty jealousy ; but of conflicts between opposing tendencies of thought and faith there is no evidence, either as respects Jewish or heathen inclinations. The national traits of the Macedonians were revealed in their Christian life. Without the intellectual vivacity and subtlety which, in other places, opened the way for the inroads of speculative gnosis ; without the restlessness of the Hellenic mind which found vent in the discussion of Christian problems—that active, practical, buoyant character which made the power of Greece felt throughout the world, the courage, tenacity, and power of endurance developed a type of Chris-